

## ON THE BEGINNING OF THE 107TH CONGRESS

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Madam Speaker, today we begin the 107th Congress, and much work lies ahead of us. It is my hope that we will be able to join together to do the work of the American people who have entrusted us to do just that. The American people want a government which rises above partisan bickering and makes a real commitment to empowering individuals and communities. Our parents, teachers, and schools need the ability and resources to make their own decisions on educating America's children so that no child is left behind and every child has the chance to succeed.

Madam Speaker, this Congress must also work to ensure that every American has access to affordable and quality health care. And this Congress should grant the hardworking people of America real relief from overbearing tax burdens they currently face, starting with the elimination of the marriage penalty tax and the death tax.

I am confident that we will rise to these challenges and pass responsible legislation which will meet the needs of not only Nevadans but every American.

## CONGRATULATING GALE NORTON ON HER NOMINATION AS SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

(Mr. SCHAFFER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHAFFER. Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome everyone back and also to congratulate the Governor of Texas, the President-elect of the United States, not only for inspiring and earning the confidence of the country but in particular for the selection and nomination announcement early on about the Secretary of the Interior. Gale Norton, from Colorado, is the past attorney general for the great State of Colorado; and I am thoroughly excited and convinced that our colleagues, Madam Speaker, will be thrilled as well with the skill, expertise and attributes that Gale Norton will bring to the office of Secretary of the Interior. Her record in the State of Colorado is one that is clearly in the best interests of maintaining the integrity of our environment and doing so in a way that honors and respects western values and realizes the integral link between economic livelihoods of Westerners and also the maintenance and preservation of our most precious natural resources.

It is going to be an exciting time for us to work closely with the Department of the Interior under that new leadership, and I am anxious to move ahead and look forward to working hard with the new secretary.

## SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE KEEP OUR PROMISE TO AMERICA'S MILITARY RETIREES ACT IN 107TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHOWS. Madam Speaker, today the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) and I are introducing the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act. This is the successor bill to H.R. 2966 and H.R. 3573 which we introduced in the 106th Congress.

Madam Speaker, the United States is the greatest military power in the world. We could never have achieved such superiority without the millions of Americans who risked all to serve this great country. These patriots put the security of home and family on the line to defend the freedoms of all Americans. We do not hesitate to ask American men and women to make military service a career. And what do they ask for in return? All they ask is that the promises made when they entered the service are fulfilled when they retire.

Americans who agreed to serve a military career, at least 20 years, to protect our democracy were promised lifetime health care benefits by recruiters. But for many, the promised health care was not delivered. The Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act would restore adequate health care to our military retirees by enabling them to elect coverage under the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program.

Last year, Congress responded to overwhelming grassroots support for the Keep Our Promise Act by including portions of the bill in the 2001 National Defense Authorization Act. Congress took the historic step of extending TRICARE, the military health care program, to military retirees beyond the age of 65 beginning in FY 2002. Finally, elderly military retirees will be able to keep TRICARE as a supplement to Medicare just like elderly civilian Federal retirees can keep their FEHBP as a supplement to Medicare.

Unfortunately, Congress did not address the pressing health care needs of military retirees under age 65 who must continue coverage under a TRICARE program that is woefully inadequate for many of them. TRICARE essentially offers health care benefits to retirees at military treatment facilities on a space-available basis. That is, they can pay for treatment if there is room for them at a military base. But with downsizing and base closures, access to military health care is dif-

ficult. It is impossible for those who cannot travel even short distances. And many retirees who do not live near bases cannot find a civilian doctor who participates in TRICARE. The Promise Act will allow retirees who are not well served by TRICARE to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan.

Madam Speaker, retirees who entered the service prior to June 7, 1956, when the program now known as TRICARE was enacted actually saw much of their promised and earned benefits taken away. Under the Keep Our Promise Act, the United States Government would keep its word to this most elderly group of retirees by paying the full cost of FEHBP enrollment. Military retirees across the country will tell you that this is landmark legislation to fulfill the government's broken promise for which they have been fighting for years. Madam Speaker, when you or I or anyone else buys something on the open market, we are always warned to let the buyer beware. But military recruiters are not salesmen. Recruiters are agents of the United States Government, the American people.

Should Americans doubt their own government? We owe it to our military retirees who were led to believe they would receive lifetime health care that the government will be there for them. Madam Speaker, it is up to Congress to adequately fund TRICARE so it can provide the level of health care we owe our military retirees. And we must make sure that the Defense Department administers TRICARE in a manner consistent with that goal. Right now TRICARE does not properly serve many of our military retirees. They need to be treated fairly and compassionately. This is what the Keep Our Promise Act does.

Passing this bill will let America's military retirees who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf know that we honor and respect them by keeping our word to them. And passing this bill will get the attention of the next generation of Americans who must not be discouraged from military service.

Madam Speaker, we should keep our promise to America's Military retirees. We should pass the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act.

## VACATING HOUSE RESOLUTION 11

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the proceedings whereby House Resolution 11 was considered and adopted are vacated since the same resolution had been previously adopted as H. Res. 10.

There was no objection.

## MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment concurrent resolutions of the House of the following titles: